

Father Nicholas McLoughlin

13 January 2016



Pope Francis' encyclical

Laudato Si'

(Praise be to You)

ON THE CARE OF
OUR COMMON HOME

A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love. Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory. Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love and accompany creation as it groans in travail. You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good. Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you! Amen.

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Title of the Encyclical comes from St. Francis’

Prayer of Praise for Creation

“Praise be to you my Lord.”

Laudato Si’

Praise Be To You
ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF
THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS



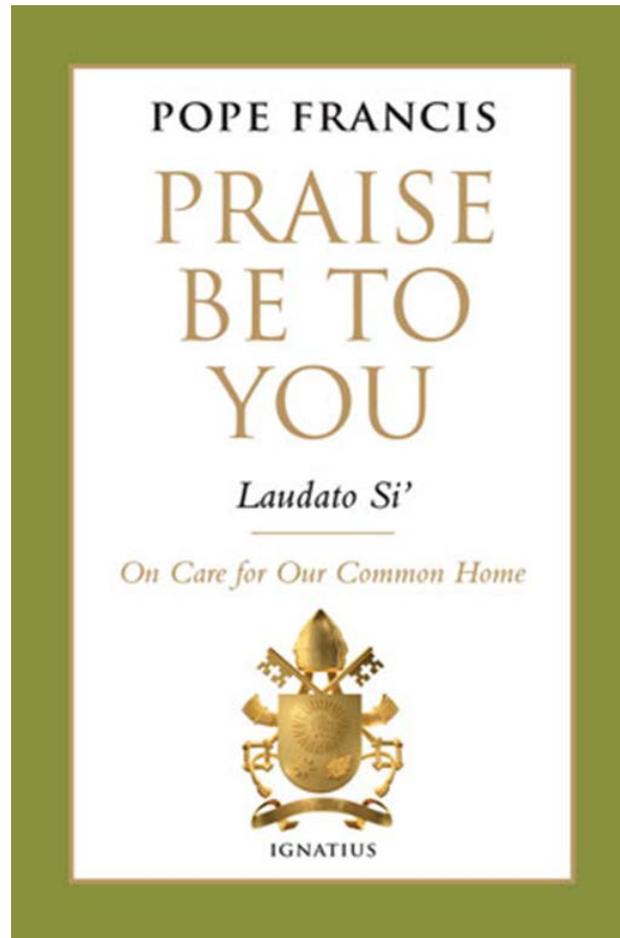
Concern for the environment
thus needs to be joined
to a sincere love
for our fellow human beings
and an unwavering commitment
to resolving the problems society.

Pope Francis

*Laudato Si':
On Care For
Our Common Home*



The Pope weaves **the two themes** together as aspects of
the same spiritual illness facing the world today.



The encyclical letter has **264 paragraphs**, with a 16 paragraph introduction, followed by **six chapters** on the integrated issues of the environment and poverty.

- **The Title Chapters are**
- **Chapter 1, “What is happening to our common home?”**
 - **Chapter 2, the Gospel of Creation**
- **Chapter 3, The Human Roots of the Ecological problem**
 - **Chapter 4, Integral Ecology**
 - **Chapter 5, Lines of approach and action**
 - **Chapter 6, Ecological Education and Spirituality.**
- **The encyclical concludes with a prayer for our earth and a prayer for Christians in union with creation.**

Who is the letter addressed to?

“All peoples of the world” – not just Catholics.

Here is what Pope Francis says

“I urgently appeal, then, for a dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect all” (#14).

It cites from the following:

**Pope Paul VI, St. Pope John Paul II,
Pope Benedict, who was known as the “Green Pope.”
National Catholic Conferences of bishops,
Patriarch Bartholomew, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant and Sufi
sources.**

The Encyclical has been ‘spun’ as the “Climate change encyclical.”



**Often a truth (cartoon) is spoken in jest – a post-Christmas cartoon.
4 (23-26) of the 264 paragraphs deal with climate control**

Summary of what is in Chapter 1

The first chapter examines the problems of our age – **the environment**, yes, but also the **breakdown in social relationships**. As did **Pope John Paul II**, with his concept “**human ecology**,” and **Pope Benedict XVI**, most especially in *Caritas in Veritate*, **Pope Francis** stresses the **link between human and environmental crises**, which he says “are due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless.”

What are some of the issues?

Pollution: the air we breathe with its pollutants

Toxic waste: making the earth into “an immense pile of filth.”

Throwaway culture: when we could recycle or use renewable resources.

Climate as a common good: a “solid scientific consensus” has emerged that **human activity** has contributed significantly to the **general warming of the planet**. Other factors include **volcanic activity**, **solar cycle**. It is agreed that **fossil fuels** are at the center of the worldwide energy system, triggering a **large increase in greenhouse gases**.
The poor are more affected by climate control than the rich.

Water and its management vital for poorer nations.

Loss of biodiversity: due to **loss of woodlands and waterways.** We crowd out many species and ruin their habitat by building highways, damming water resources and tearing down forests. **Those looking for fast profit often don't care about ecosystems.** Applaud efforts to provide sanctuaries, e.g. Amazon and Congo River basins are the world's "lungs." **Oceans,** particularly coral reefs are threatened by agricultural run-offs, warming of sea waters and industrial waste being dumped.

Decline in quality of human life and breakdown of society. Economic or Technology growth has not always led to better lives for most people.

What is the impact & what is the Response

The media tends to favor the rich and is beyond the reach of the poor and it is not effective in getting message out. **Message:** a true plan to sustain nature is also a plan to sustain people. We must hear **the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth** at the same time. As long as merely economic interests supersede everything else and dominate the conversation, no genuine reform can occur – **'money talks.'**

Chapter 2 – The Gospel of Creation



The “**Gospel of Creation**” offers a brief catechesis on the environment as seen from the “very good” creation accounts of Genesis and then through the

The dignity of the human person is that he/she are made in God's image.

Scripture helps us see that human life is grounded in 3 relationships:

We relate to God: Neighbor; and to the earth.

We are not masters of the universe, we are caretakers – “We are not God.”

God writes a wonderful book: **Creation**; **nature** reveals God.

Our role is to till, keep and protect the earth (Gen 2:15).

The bible does not support that humans are allowed to destroy the earth.

Sin is where our relationships are out of balance. E.G. Cain & Able, Noah.

The Psalms and the prophets give praise to Creation as the Glory of God.

If we fail to make God central, then we risk thinking that we are God.

Art. 67, the Pope says, humans do not have unilateral power to exploit and use up the resources of the earth. The challenge in the modern world is, how do we make God central in this discussion?

For **people of faith**, the **earth is a shared inheritance**, meant for the benefit of everyone.

“The rich and the poor have equal dignity” (#95).

Chapter 3: The human roots of the Ecological crisis.

We have had rapid change over the past 200 years.

Technology serves the human family incredibly well; it is also used to destroy life. **Advance in technology is good** for society if there is also an advance in human responsibility, Values, and conscience. **There is a risk when technological advances are blinded** by self-interest, greed, or violence.

The technocratic paradigm assumption is false that states, **there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods.** This can carry over into **politics and economics.**

It is difficult to see how the poor fit into this paradigm. We can work to direct and limit technology. Deep within us is a desire for **a more authentic life**, not one driven by profit and selfishness – **a standard of life is more important than a standard of living.** E.g. the most recent collapse on Wall Street and Main Street is an example of that outcome.

The Pope states that **everything is connected:** the cry of nature; the cry of the poor; the cry of the embryo; the cry of the person with disabilities. Technology, bottom line – **things** – are becoming more important than **people.** E.g. 50 years

ago, we had big families and small houses; today, we have enormous houses and no families or, at least, less than replacement, which in the U.S. is 1.8 children per couple – **things are more important than people**. Bottom line in a **secular world is everything is valuable only relative to one's needs**. People are relative and disposable in a **'throwaway society.'** We live in a use and throwaway culture.

The Pope continues, we must protect the ability of men and women **to work** as a means of finding their livelihood, their value, and their contribution to the human family. We should not sacrifice workers for more economic gain.



The Pope supports advances in **molecular biology and genetics**, provided the **ethical limits** of such works are followed. We cannot sever ethics from technology and science.

Chapter 4: Integral Ecology

Ecology is the study of the relationship between living things and the environment in which they live and grow. **Everything** in such a study **is interconnected**. When we speak about **environment**, we refer to **the relationship between nature and the community of creatures** that live in it.



The Pope speaks of the need for an **economic ecology and a social ecology** in which all of the elements of a particular ecosystem can be considered as interconnected, including the human dimension. **He cites as an example**, when large development, mining, or agricultural projects are being considered, the indigenous communities should be the primary voice in the planning.

The Pope speaks about **ecology of daily life** – that is, the development of places and neighborhoods where people live. **Urban planners**, too, practice good ecology when they plan transportation, services, and open areas for all to use. The guiding principle for development must always be **the common good**, which calls for solidarity, especially among **the poor**. **Future generations** have a stake in these conversations. What do we want our children to inherit from us?

Chapter 5: Lines of approach and action

In this chapter, the Pope calls for a “common plan” among all nations, a “global consensus” is essential

Such a consensus should include and should lead to:

- **Planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture;**
- **Developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy**
 - **Encouraging a more efficient use of energy;**
- **Promoting a better management of marine and forest resources;**
 - **Assuring universal access to drinking water.**

Poverty

Pope Francis insists that priority for poor countries must be to “eliminate extreme poverty” and to “promote the social development of their people.” There is also a need to acknowledge the “scandalous level” of consumption in some privileged sectors of their population and “to combat corruption more effectively.”

There is a great need to **develop less polluting forms of energy production**. They need the help of developed countries to give good example with a need to reduce pollution which affects the planet.

Oceans

The growing problem of marine waste and the protection of the open seas represent “particular challenges.” What is needed, the Pope suggests, is an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called “global commons.”

Radical Decisions

A “more responsible overall approach” is needed to deal with global warming and eliminating poverty. He continues, “Given this situation, it is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed by agreement among national governments and empowered to impose sanctions.”

Dialogue for new national and local policies

Much can be done at the national and local levels. **People can be taught to** conserve energy, consume less, avoid goods known to cause pollution, manage waste better, and protect certain species and practice ecologically sound agricultural methods. **Local people** can be helped to manage resources ranging from water to forests to land. The Pope calls on politicians to give up being owned by investors; invest instead in the human family.

The Pope insists there needs to be **dialogue and transparency in decision making**. **The common good** should have **precedence over profits**. Profit cannot drive every decision.

There is an urgent **need for politics and economics to enter a serious dialogue**. The financial system cannot be given absolute power. It must be more attentive to ethical principles. More profit alone cannot solve problems.

We can care for the environment and still succeed in business. We cannot sustain the lifestyle of those who consume and destroy goods. The pope calls on those who lead production decisions to pause and consider another way. **Politics** itself can become corrupt by providing policies or ignoring laws, all to benefit production and profit. When this happens, the whole system is crippled and we will never solve the crisis. There is a **serious need for religions of the world to dialogue with one another and with science** and with **various ecological movements** around the world.

Chapter 6: Ecological Education and Spirituality

Lifestyle

The Pope insists “A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.”

We need to embark **on new paths of authentic freedom.**

The change is lifestyle “could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power.” Consumer movements accomplish this by boycotting certain products, or, consumers refusing to buy certain products, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production. When social pressure affects earnings, businesses have to find ways to produce differently.

The Pope insists that there is a need to “**overcome individualism,**” in order to develop a “different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.” He continues, “Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment.”

We need to awaken **a new reverence for life,** involving less self-interest with a greater concern for others, assessing the impact of our choices and decisions on the world around us.

Education

Education is key. Families, parishes, schools, seminaries and colleges need to take the Pope’s encyclical seriously. There is also a need to challenge political institutions to raise awareness. There

is a need to challenge the myths of our culture. We need to show that “individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, and an unregulated market” run counter to “ecological citizenship.”

In pointing out the importance of environmental education, the Pope gives some practical suggestions:

- Avoiding the use of plastic and paper;
 - Reducing water consumption;
 - Separating refuse;
- Cooking only what can reasonably can be consumed;
 - Showing care for other living beings;
 - Using public transport or car-pooling;
 - Planting trees;
 - Turning off unnecessary lights.

The Pope concludes, “Such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on Earth is worthwhile.”

Christian Spirituality

Christian spirituality, the Pope says, proposes an “**alternative understanding**” of the quality of life, “**free of obsession with consumption.**” We need to learn an ancient lesson, he suggests, that “**less is more.**” The **empty heart** needs obsessive consumption. “Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and **the capacity to be happy with little.** It is a return to that **simplicity** which

allows us to stop and appreciate small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be **spiritually detached from what we possess**, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack.”

The ecological crisis we face “is also a **summons to profound interior conversion.**” The lack of balance in the ecosystems reflect **a lack of balance in the human heart.** This spirituality is based on an “**attitude of heart**” that approaches life with serenity, attentiveness, and trust. It leads away from being superficial, aggressive and greedy. A simple example of this is **to pause before meals to express gratitude** for the gift we have and to be in solidarity with those in need.

We need to **live out our vocation as protectors.** We need to see the connections between our engagement in the sacramental life of the Church and our protection of human life and the environment. The Eucharist confirms us in our stewardship of creation.

Sunday as Sabbath day allows us **to reflect on the gift of creation**, God’s cathedral of nature all around us, and the need to be responsible to preserve that cathedral. This prevents us from an empty activism on the Sabbath.

Finally, for Christians, renewed **devotion to the mystery of the Trinity**, to **Our Lady** are key pathways to **right relationship with God, with one another and the whole of creation.**

The bottom line is that Pope Francis wants to create **a civilization of love** and concern - political, economic, and cultural – not one of hate and greed. He wants a society that is more humane, worthy of us persons, from which will emerge the communal will to protect the environment.

Pope Francis concludes with two prayers:

One for **those who believe in God**; one for **Christians** to embrace our commitment to creation.

A prayer for the earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain

at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united

with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.